



April 21, 2006

Message from the Assistant Secretary

30 Million Medicare Beneficiaries Now Receiving Prescription Drug Coverage

On April 20, Medicare announced today that more than 30 million Medicare beneficiaries are now receiving prescription drug coverage. The nation's pharmacies filled 270 million prescriptions for Medicare beneficiaries in the first three months and more than 93 million prescriptions were filled during March -- averaging 3 million prescriptions filled per day.

In addition, 5.8 million people with Medicare get drug coverage from the Veterans Administration and other sources with prescription drug coverage equal to Medicare - - bringing the total to approximately 35.8 million Medicare beneficiaries now receiving prescription drug coverage.

"These strong enrollment numbers are a tribute to everyone in the national network of caring -- all of our partners, community leaders, the State Health Insurance Programs (SHIPs), and family members, who have provided counseling and assistance to the millions of beneficiaries who are now taking advantage of this new benefit and saving money," HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt said. "With a month to go, we've passed our projections of 28 to 30 million enrollees in the first year, and we are intensifying our local outreach efforts to get more seniors signed up before the May 15th deadline."

To view press release visit:

<http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2006pres/20060420.html>

To view enrollment data online visit

cms.hhs.gov/PrescriptionDrugCovGenIn/02_enrollmentdata.asp.

To enroll, visit www.medicare.gov.

Josefina G. Carbonell

AoA News

AoA Partnerships to Enroll Hispanic Americans in Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage

AoA's mission is to work with seniors and their caregivers at the local level to inform families and providers about important new Medicare prescription drug coverage benefits. This includes more than 2.3 million Hispanics who are enrolled in Medicare and who will be helped by these benefits. Together, we are using our strength at the community level – the Aging Network and its community-based organizations and the strength of the CMS outreach strategies - to reach older Hispanic Americans where they live and work. AoA is conducting outreach in the Hispanic community through our national partners such as the National Alliance for Hispanic Health, Asociacion Nacional pro Personas Mayores, and the National Hispanic Council on Aging. NHCOA, as part of a coalition with several other organizations made an urgent call to action on April 5, asking members of the Hispanic health, civic, community-based organizations, non-profit, and faith communities to assist all Hispanic seniors in taking advantage of the opportunity to enroll in the new Medicare prescription drug program before the May 15 deadline to avoid facing a penalty.

AoA also is working with more than 60 local community-based organizations throughout the country that are outreaching to the Hispanic/Latino population. For example, the New York City Department for the Aging has established community partnerships and has opened 40 satellite “walk-in-centers” to provide counseling for older people to assist with enrollment. CMS is actively reaching out to the Hispanic community with information and materials in Spanish, and through national Hispanic radio and print media outlets. The Assistant Secretary has been traveling throughout the country and meeting with seniors including those in the Hispanic community and their caregivers. She has seen the difference it makes to people with Medicare when they realize the savings they are getting after their prescription drugs are covered under Medicare. Secretary Leavitt's mobile office tour to promote partnerships at the community level started at Little Havana in Miami, Florida. The Assistant Secretary has joined Secretary Leavitt in several of these events to help seniors understand the importance of signing up for these new benefits by May 15. Please join AoA and local efforts by partnering in reaching out to older adults and their caregivers who need help in enrolling in Medicare Prescription Drug coverage. For more information visit: <http://www.aoa.gov/medicare/index.asp>.

Other News

Elderly Have Higher Risk for Diseases from Fine Particle Pollution

New data from a four-year study of 11.5 million Medicare enrollees show that short-term exposure to fine particle air pollution from such sources as motor vehicle exhaust and power plant emissions significantly increases the risk for cardiovascular and respiratory disease among people over 65 years of age. The study, funded by

the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, a component of the National Institutes of Health, is the largest ever conducted on the link between fine particle air pollution and hospital admissions for heart- and lung-related illnesses. The study results show that small increases in fine particle air pollution resulted in increased hospital admissions for heart and vascular disease, heart failure, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and respiratory infection. For more information on fine particle air pollution and other environmental health topics, please visit the NIEHS website at <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/home.htm>.

For more information about Aging News, please visit:

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<http://www.aoa.gov/press/health/health.asp>

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About AoA

AoA works with a nationwide network of organizations and service providers to make support services and resources available to older persons and their caregivers. For more information about AoA, please contact us by mail at U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging, Washington, DC 20201; by phone at (202) 619-0724; by e-mail at aoainfo@aoa.gov; or visit us on the Web at www.aoa.gov.